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THE FLYING
Burgmaster.

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Dirk van Wodenblock
Burgermeester

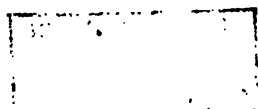
The Flying Burgermaster
A Legend
of the Black Forest



J. Morley invt et sculpt
1832

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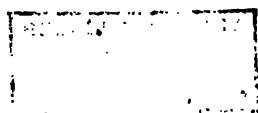


Dirk van Wodenblock
Burgermeister

The Flying Burgermaster
A Legend
of the Black Forest



J. Storerley invt et sculp
1832



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In Swabia's forest, wild and black,
A weary traveller lost his track :
Dark was the night—the thunder's crash
Swift followed on the lightening's flash ;
And awful as the tempest spoke,
Responsive groaned the blasted oak.
The way-worn man, with rueful gaze,
Eyed the red lightening's fearful blaze ;
And, as the rattling thunder past,
Lost in the howlings of the blast,
He muttered Pater-nosters seven,
To avert the threatening wrath of heaven.
Once in the pauses of the storm,
It seemed some strange unearthly form,
Glared in a flash of lurid light ;
And, as it crost his withered sight,
The spectre that he gazed upon,
Seemed like a flying skeleton !



Swift as a dart the phantom past ;
 Strange sounds were borne upon the blast—
 A dizzying whirl—a dreadful clicking,
 Like the portentous death-watch ticking :
 Then louder than the riven rock,
 Pealed the dread name of ‘ Wodenblock.’

* * * *

And had he with unblasted sight
 Beheld that strange mysterious night !
 The terror of the old and young,
 Theme of the crone’s low chaunted song.
 The boldest hearts sustained a shock,
 At the dread name of ‘ Wodenblock.’
 That awful one, who restless flew
 From clime to clime, the wretched Jew.



Who, wandering, for his crime atones,
Wears still his flesh upon his bones,
With decent covering from the weather.
But Wodenblock was doomed for ever
A naked skeleton to stray,
Dragged by his fatal leg away.
No sin was his, or cause of shame,
'Twas Turningvort had all the blame.
Then thrice accurst be Turningvort,
The great artificer of Dort.



Rombout van Turningsvort



Next to replace, he turned his mind,
 The useful member thus resigned.
 His doctors told him, that at Dort
 The great mechanic Turningvort,
 Had, by deep study and reflection,
 Made a cork leg of such perfection ;
 So firm, yet ^{so light} ~~steady~~, that it stood,
 Walked, danced, and ran, like flesh and blood.
 The news was music to Mynheer—
 That very night a chaise and pair
 Was sent to Dort, the boon to beg,
 From the artist of his famous leg.



No sooner asked—the prayer was granted,
To try his leg the artist panted ;
And, tho' engaged to dine at Delft,
He would adjust it first himself :
'Tis done, and fitted to a T,
And Turningvort receives his fee.



A sum supplying ample power,
To pay his daughter's marriage dower—
The lovely Blanche!—his pride and boast,
From Dort to Delft the reigning toast.



Blanche van Turningroot

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The morning comes—and out he sallies,
Avoiding crooked lanes and allies ;
With smiling looks, and air confiding,
Down broad strait streets triumphant gliding.
The leg displayed no turn for kicking,
A little whirl—a gentle ticking ;
Was all the fault he could descry,
And that he thought would soon pass by.



Just as he gained the Stadt house door,
 A friend he had not seen before,
 Turned quickly down the Doolen street,
 Eager his old ally to greet ;
 He wheeled around without reflection,
 Quite in the opposite direction
 To that which he had just pursued ;
 When—as with magic power endued
 A sudden jerk, a whirling thrill—
 The leg no more obeys his will ;
 In haste, he had omitted learning
 Which spring to touch in case of turning ;
 And prest on one of wondrous force,
 To impel him on his forward course.
 The act was scarce performed, when lo !
 Swift as the arrow from the bow,
 He felt himself compelled to fly ;
 His friends and neighbours marvelled why
 He travelled with such headlong speed ;
 Some thought him mad, and some agreed
 That Madame Wodenblock was dying,
 And he for doctor Von Tronip flying.



Onward he sped—ah, who can tell
 The terrors of that potent spell !
 The whizzing, whirling, horrid ticking,
 The wild leg to his body sticking ;
 Dragging him on thro' tangled woods,
 O'er dykes, morasses, rivers, floods ;
 Exhausted, trembling, gasping, fainting,
 With quick drawn breath convulsive panting ;
 Trees, houses, churches, past him flying,
 His pitious voice for succour crying,
 ' A thousand dollars be his prize
 Who stops my course !'—so fast he flies,
 The half formed words, which crave assistance,
 Die on the air in lengthening distance.
 Still faster flies the leg, and faster
 Follows the breathless Burgomaster.

* * * *

'Tis sunday—the cathedral chime
 Of Harlem, tells the sacred time
 Of morning prayer : her citizens
 Breathe the fresh air 'till church begins ;
 And, congregated thus together,
 Discourse on politics and weather.



And there was Mynheer Turningvort,
 The great artificer of Dort—
 Sudden he starts, in terror lost,
 Before him glides the grisly ghost
 Of Wodenblock, i' the clothes he wore
 At Rotterdam, ten days before.
 The awful spectre dashed along
 Like lightening, thro' the affrighted throng ;
 Causing the stoutest hearts to thrill —
 Its cheek was livid—ghastly — still
 The starting eye and gasping breath,
 Almost proclaimed the stroke of death
 As yet delayed.—On Turningvort
 That glaring eye, with vengeance fraught,
 Was fixt—whose every fibre shook,
 And quailed beneath that fearful look.
 The phantom shrieked, “Thou wretch accurst,
 Thy baneful art has done its worst ;
 Thy leg, which drags me to my doom,
 Leaves me no quiet in the tomb ;
 But still compels me on to fly
 Its slave to all eternity !”
 The last faint words were lost in air,
 So rapid in its dread career
 The phantom flew ; in consternation
 Leaving the awe-struck congregation.



With silent wonder and amaze,
 On Turningvort the eager gaze
 Of all was fixed, convinced that he
 Alone could solve the mystery.
 But mute he stood—for dared he tell
 His secret fears—that but too well
 His curious springs, wheels, cork, and leather,
 By rarest art combined together,
 Had done their work : and tho' by him
 Perchance this superhuman limb
 Might condescend to be directed,
 It still might spurn to be subjected
 To one, upon whose depth of science
 It felt but moderate reliance.
 'Twixt doubt and fear his bosom tost,
 He felt that Wodenblock was lost ;
 Lost by his means—a murderer he,
 Tho' unrevealed his infamy.
 The thought shot maddening thro' his brain ;
 Sudden he darted from the train
 Which prest around him, wondering why
 He wore that look of agony.

* * * *

That night his livid corse was found
 In the great canal of Harlem, drown'd.



And gossips tell, tho' since that day,
Weeks, months, and years have rolled away,
Poor Wodenblock finds no repose,
From morning's dawn to evening's close ;
Summer and winter, sunshine, storm,
Still restless flies his ghastly form :
The desperate leg still whirls along,
Itself unchanged, plump, active, strong,
Rapid, relentless, dragging on
The Burgomaster's skeleton !!!



